

CBT Chapters

- ✓ Managing Work
- ✓ Importance of Communicating
- ✓ Developing Employees - Achieving Results
- ✓ Day-to-Day Challenges
- Final Exam

Introduction

It's difficult to cover all relevant information regarding day-to-day supervision. Effective supervisors find ways to manage many things well - the work of the unit, communication among staff, employee issues, and their own work. Since these topics are covered at a high level in this course, it is recommended you supplement what you learn here with additional educational opportunities. For your convenience, later you will find a suggested reading list of material related to the topics in this course.

As mentioned previously, supervisors are not only responsible for their work; but also the work of their employees. The following section discusses how to effectively assign work to your employees, monitor their progress, and address any problems that may occur.



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Planning and Prioritizing

One of the most important roles of a supervisor is the management of work. Managing multiple assignments, each with varying degrees of importance, requires planning and prioritizing. Setting priorities necessitates that you

- Understand which tasks take priority over others. This may entail discussing certain assignments with your supervisor to assist with determining what work should receive attention first.
- Understand the details of each task. You'll need to review requirements carefully and determine the various steps necessary to complete a project before delegating it.
- Estimate an approximate amount of time to complete each task. Estimating time is an important skill. The employees assigned to the task are an important source of information in developing time requirements.
- Understand the ability of each of your employees. This will enable you to more effectively match a task to an employee or team of employees.
- Recognize employee's current tasks, future tasks, and current level of effort. You do not want an employee to have too much or too little work, but just enough to consistently and efficiently keep him/her productive.

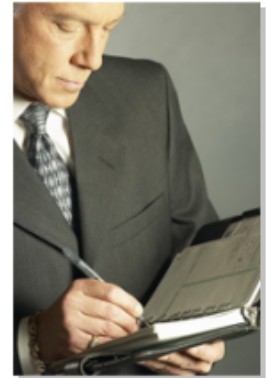
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Planning and Prioritizing (continued)

It is recommended you create some sort of written plan for your unit's work. This plan is not a schedule, but more of a list of work broken out by priority and assignments. It's a department level plan that should be continuously monitored and updated. Action plans and task lists are popular tools used in planning and prioritizing. Ask your supervisor if there is a preferred tool for this function.

Note: If there are factors that may cause your unit to miss a deadline, you should elevate the issue to your supervisor prior to the deadline. Be prepared to offer potential solutions to these risks.



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Managing Schedules

Once you have a firm understanding of the work to be done and who will be responsible for completing each task, you need to create schedules for each employee. These can be formal or informal, but the main purpose of a schedule is to ensure that you and your employees understand the

- Specific tasks for a given deliverable
- Order in which the tasks should be completed
- Deadline for each task
- Person who is responsible for completing each task

You can schedule work on a daily, weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, or quarterly basis. The choice is yours. There are a variety of software tools to create schedules, or you can create your own template using a software application of your choice.



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Managing Schedules (continued)

When creating schedules you need to ensure adequate coverage, while balancing the needs of your employees to be absent from work for a variety of reasons including medical-related appointments, child care, personal business, vacation, etc. Consistency and equity must be applied when approving leave and scheduling overtime.



While leave is typically requested in advance and needs to be approved, some absences may not be foreseeable. Also, both scheduled and unscheduled absences may be protected or required under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), provisions for sick leave, etc. You need to be prepared to meet this challenge. Also, if employees are required to work more than 40 hours in a week, you must be aware of the laws that govern overtime and compensatory leave and what impact that will have on your budget. For example, the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) requires certain employees earn overtime or compensatory leave at 1 ½ times their regular rate when working more than 40 hours in a week.

Note: Both FMLA and FLSA are covered in more detail in other required supervisory training.

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Delegating

Scheduling must be considered when delegating, but scheduling is not delegating. Delegating work includes

- Providing a **clear schedule of tasks** for each employee. Ensure employees **understand** their schedule and assigned work. Give employees an opportunity to discuss the schedule of tasks and their ability to meet the assigned deadlines.
- Specifying the desired end result. Establish **clear guidelines** for how the work will be accomplished and **the level of quality** expected.
- Allowing the employee to determine the best method for accomplishing the tasks. It is important that employees take **ownership** of their tasks.
- Retaining the ultimate responsibility for ensuring expectations are met.



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Delegating (continued)

Giving employees new opportunities allows for career growth and development. Delegating is an important aspect of employee development. It communicates trust between you and your staff and frees up your time to complete other assignments.

Be careful not to provide too much input, direction, or review of delegated work. Doing so may cause the employee to feel you are micromanaging his/her work and cancel out the benefits of delegation. You will find there may be times you are required to closely manage a delegated assignment, but you should only do this when necessary. Allowing employees to complete tasks in their own way is the best approach, unless an employee needs direct and sustained coaching or training.



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Monitoring Work

To determine whether work is of sufficient quality or quantity and whether it will be completed on time, you must actively monitor work in progress. Monitoring work is a continuous process. Monitoring should be done frequently enough for you to determine what is happening, but not so frequent that it interferes with the work itself. Methods of monitoring work include

- Examining the work product
- Having discussions with individual employees regarding project status
- Conducting weekly team meetings
- Requesting progress reports from employees on specific projects
- Encouraging feedback from clients

You must determine which monitoring method(s) best fits the work situation.



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Quality Assurance

Quality assurance of your employees' work is a critical function of supervision. It is important you establish and communicate quality standards for all work. The establishment of these standards may be based on legal requirements or input received from your customers. Customers could include other employees or work units from your agency, private citizens, businesses, or other State or federal agencies. These standards should be discussed and understood by your employees.



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Quality Assurance (continued)

Monitoring quality and timelines throughout the life-cycle of a project may allow errors to be caught early, preventing compounding problems later. In addition to reducing errors, quality control checks can also have the added benefit of training your employees to work to a particular quality level.

Releasing poor quality work not only reflects on you and your employees, but on your agency as well. The quality of your employees' work directly affects your agency's reputation. Therefore, it is vitally important you examine your employees' work and request revisions to work that doesn't meet quality standards.



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Chapter Summary: Managing Work

In this chapter, you learned about managing the work of your unit. Next, you will learn about the importance of managing communication.

Discuss any questions you may have with your supervisor or Human Resources office.

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Importance of Communicating

Communication with your employees is a critical part of your job. Without regular communication you risk being out of touch with current issues. Let your employees know you are available not only to give instructions, but to hear their concerns, provide feedback, or to shed light on rumors. There will be times when you're unavailable, but having an open-door policy encourages open communication with your employees.

Also, it is your responsibility to keep your employees informed of important information that affects their work and the organization. Establishing clear communication channels and sharing agency information with your employees will help resolve problems and allow you an opportunity to gain valuable insight into possible concerns with existing or proposed methods, procedures or approaches.



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Verbal Versus Written Communication

Whether information is better conveyed verbally or in writing depends on the situation. In verbal communication, there is no written record of what was said or what agreements were reached. However, verbal communication allows for a much more free interaction and conveyance of ideas. Depending on the circumstances, it may be important to write a brief memo summarizing a verbal conversation and confirming the commitments made.

Written communication, including email, is a convenient and easy way to communicate. However, in written communication it is difficult to impart a tone of voice. Keep your documents professional, appropriate and brief. It is important that documents be error-free, with correct spelling, and appropriate grammar and sentence structure. This will prevent miscommunication and will avoid the need for clarification particularly if the documents must be disclosed in response to a public records request.



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Team Meetings

Another important communication tool is team meetings; they provide an excellent way to stay connected with your employees and help foster team chemistry. Holding weekly or monthly team update meetings the same time each month, if possible, will reinforce the meeting's importance. You and your employee(s) should come to the meeting prepared to

- Discuss work status / progress
- Reestablish expectations and goals
- Adjust schedules as needed
- Communicate important information
- Identify any risks to work or schedules

Note: Having a scribe record meeting minutes documents decisions made. Remember to update your plans and schedules based on decisions made in these meetings.



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Communicating with Your Supervisor

Communicating with your supervisor is different from communicating with your employees, but is just as important. You need to learn how and when your supervisor wants communication to occur - weekly one-to-ones, regular written reports, emails, etc. It's important that you are always prepared to provide accurate and current information about work in progress and anticipated completion dates, if applicable. It is especially important to advise of any obstacles, delays, or other risks you encounter or anticipate that could affect the timely and accurate completion of work assignments, including new priorities. Discussing these barriers with your supervisor provides you an opportunity to suggest resolutions to resolve the situation or to request assistance in re-prioritizing assignments.

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Chapter Summary: Importance of Communicating

In this chapter, you learned about the importance of managing communication. The next chapter discusses the importance of employee development.

Remember to consult your supervisor or Human Resources office with any questions or issues.

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the course.



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Developing Employees - Achieving Results

Perhaps one of the most rewarding aspects of being a supervisor is assisting your employees achieve success. The success of the agency depends on your employees' ability to succeed. Understanding your employees' strengths, weaknesses, career goals and interests will aid you in this process.

It seems like I could determine strengths and weaknesses during performance evaluation.



In addition to day-to-day interactions with your staff, performance evaluation meetings provide excellent opportunities to discuss their career aspirations, skill deficits, educational background, and their plans for or interests in future education. Knowing this information facilitates appropriate project assignments that lead to improving and enhancing employees' knowledge and skills.

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Developing Employees (continued)

Documenting what each employee needs and how you plan to meet those needs is helpful. Creating a development plan provides this record; these plans do not need to be formal. Typical items in a development plan might include training needed or desired, formal education needed or desired, ways to balance an employee's workload to allow for development activities, and/or cross-training opportunities in other areas of interest. It is critical that these plans are realistic - making commitments that cannot be met will only result in frustration.

The plan should be created jointly with you and your employee. This simple act will have a powerful, positive effect. Acknowledging an employee's interest in career growth and providing opportunities for success creates an environment where he/she will want to work and perform at a high level.



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Coaching

Coaching also assists employee development. It provides **positive support and feedback** while offering advice on how effectiveness can be improved. Coaching can be formal or informal and should result in increased job satisfaction and personal growth. Coaching techniques are also effective in dealing with multiple employees working on a team project.

You are responsible for determining what form of coaching works best for each employee and can learn more about it in MGT1004 (Managing Performance).



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Recognition

Supervisors must have the ability to plan, prioritize, delegate, communicate and provide opportunities for career growth, but the most effective supervisors also know how critical it is to recognize employees' efforts. Recognition can be accomplished in a variety of ways. Recognizing employees may be accomplished on a personal level such as in-person praise, a hand-written note, or an email. It can also be accomplished publicly such as in a newsletter, formal awards ceremony or even at a staff meeting. Recognizing a job well done encourages employees to continue to work hard and provides satisfaction not only with their position but with leadership too.



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Recognition (continued)

Recognition is effective when it's meaningful, timely, and personal. As mentioned, effective recognition can be informal such as a simple sincere, impromptu conversation in which a supervisor purposefully acknowledges the valuable contributions of an employee. It can also be more formal. Either way, in order for recognition to resonate, it's important that it be

- **Accurate and Meaningful** - It is much more meaningful when a supervisor thanks an employee for a specific accomplishment rather than a "thank you for everything" approach. Imagine the impact to morale if a supervisor credits an accomplishment to the wrong person or team, mispronounces someone's name or mis-states the team's project. These types of errors compromise the recognition effort and undermine the confidence and credibility of the management team to the employee.



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Recognition (continued)

Effective recognition should also be

- **Timely** - If recognition is limited to an annual ceremony, it's difficult for some to remember and appreciate an accomplishment that happened several months earlier. Consider using "on-the-spot" awards if possible, or at least acknowledge the effort at the time of the accomplishment.
- **Personal** - Individually acknowledging employees for their contributions, even if an entire team is being recognized, has much more significance.



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Chapter Summary: Developing Employees - Achieving Results

In this chapter, you learned about developing your employees and team. Next, you'll learn how to deal with difficult employee situations.

Discuss any questions you may have with your supervisor or Human Resources office.



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Day-to-Day Challenges

Not only are you responsible for schedules, communication, deadlines, and the quality of work in your unit, you're also responsible for supervising people. This is often one of the most challenging areas of supervision. People have unique needs, likes and dislikes, and points of view. Everybody's different and you're responsible to ensure team cohesion and production while working through these differences. The next section discusses how to recognize problems with and between employees, and how to confront problem employees.



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Recognizing the Problem

Even great supervisors face challenging situations, despite taking all the right steps to create a productive work environment. Missed deadlines, chronic absenteeism, low morale, and confrontations with other employees may occur. When faced with these situations, you will want to

- **Identify the problem** - Is it an employee or organization problem? Does it involve more than one employee? Is the problem due to lack of resources, unreasonable deadlines, or training needs?
- **Confront the problem** - If it is an employee problem, ask the employee if there are mitigating reasons. Personal problems such as family illness, death, finances, substance abuse, etc. may be affecting even the most productive employee.

Note: If a problem is subject to your control, you have an obligation to own it and fix it.



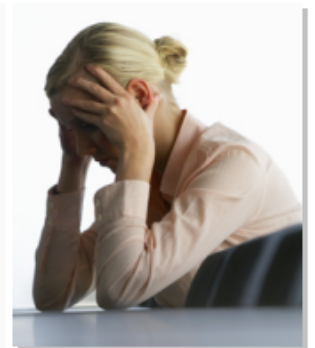
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Confronting the Problem

If the employee discloses a personal problem affecting his/her attendance and/or performance, you must treat it as CONFIDENTIAL only advising those with a need to know, such as your supervisor. The following suggested steps may help address this type of situation:

- Make the employee aware of potential sources of assistance such as your agency's Employee Assistance Program (counseling). Contact your Human Resources office for contact information or brochures so you can point your employee in the right direction.
- Address any performance issues, meet with the employee and develop a written plan to bring performance back to an acceptable level.
- Address any attendance issues. Your employee may request a change in hours to address a family issue, appointments, etc. As the supervisor, you must consider whether providing either a temporary or permanent change will have a negative impact on productivity.



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Confronting the Problem (continued)

When meeting with an employee to resolve issues or problems, it's important to be focused, clear, and concise. Stick to the facts and actual behaviors. When confronting an employee, responses may include the following.



Employee Reaction	Supervisor Response
Denial - "I didn't do it."	Emphasize facts, not speculation. Avoid making it personal. Keep focused on observed behavior.
Shift blame - "It's not my fault. Kim caused this to happen."	Keep the focus on the instigator of the problem. Do not allow diversion from the facts.
Avoid responsibility - "I was never told about this rule."	Consider what the employee is supposed to know. If there is inadequate understanding, provide the employee with the rule, policy, regulation, etc.
Accept responsibility - "You're right. I'll fix it."	Thank the employee for taking ownership of the problem and resolution.

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Scenario: Tardiness

Consider this scenario:

Helen has been a State employee for more than 15 years. During the past two months, she has been late an average of once per week, usually on Mondays but occasionally also on Fridays. Her tardiness ranges from a few minutes at a time to as much as ½ hour.

What do you think?

In this case, you would meet with Helen to discuss the tardiness issue. Acknowledge that this has not been a problem in the past, but it is now affecting her work performance and the overall performance of the team and work unit. Ask Helen what is causing this problem and if she has any ideas on how it can be corrected.

Scenario

Practice

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Scenario: Sick Time

Consider this scenario:

You've noticed lately that Rupert has begun to frequently call in sick, claiming illness. A review of his time and attendance record shows an emerging pattern of absences due to illness on Mondays, workdays immediately following holidays, and most recently, some Fridays. You suspect there may be a reason other than illness for the absences and call Rupert in to your office to discuss the matter.

What do you think?

In this case, you should discuss the issue with Rupert. Explain to him that when he calls in sick, it affects the work of everyone in the unit. Discuss the actual absences and the pattern. Remain empathetic because it may be a legitimate issue, but the pattern and frequency needs to be explained and understood. Ask Rupert what is causing this trend. Ask Rupert how he plans to address the matter.

Scenario



Practice

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Scenario: Dress Code

Consider this scenario:

You're a supervisor of a customer service office. Your department interacts directly with the public on a regular basis. Your supervisor mentioned the inappropriate appearance of one of your customer service staff. This employee, Alex, has a large offensive tattoo on his forearm. You agree with your supervisor that it's offensive and should somehow be covered up. You decide to talk to Alex.

What do you think?

In this case you need to tell Alex that there has been a complaint about his forearm tattoo. Keep the source of the complaint confidential. You can discuss the agency and/or department's dress code policy, and even though it may not specifically address tattoos, it may address rationales regarding offensive imagery. You can discuss with Alex options for covering the tattoo such as wearing a long sleeve shirt.

Scenario



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Scenario: Theft

Consider this scenario:

You're a supervisor of 11 employees. It's near the end of the year and Christmas is approaching. On Friday morning, you notice that the office supply cabinet has been depleted of tape, scissors, and packing materials. Only Joan, the administrative assistant, has access to the locked cabinet.

What do you think?

In this case you need to discuss the missing materials with Joan. Ask her if she took them. There may be a justifiable reason why they're gone. She may or may not confess. If she took them with no acceptable reason, you should ask for the items to be returned. In either case, you need to discuss the policy for theft and ramifications for violating this policy with your Human Resources office.

Scenario

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Scenario: Deadlines

Consider this scenario:

You supervise a unit that has daily turnarounds on projects. You ask one of your employees, Mark, to immediately send a status update to your supervisor for review. The next morning, you are chewed out by your supervisor for the lateness of the report. You're upset because this affects your reputation.

What do you think?

In this case you need to talk with Mark. Your emotions are running high, so you should take some time to cool down so you're rational when you meet with Mark. You can regain a proper frame of mind by considering how often Mark misses deadlines. Is this just a one time event? Was there anything going on that caused Mark to miss the deadline? Should this event trigger a discipline process? Answers to these questions can help you approach the confrontation with a level head.

Scenario

Practice

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Scenario: Skill Proficiency

Consider this scenario:

You supervise an accounting unit. One of your unit's tasks is to produce a monthly expense report for your agency. Last month, you hired a new accountant, Ron, who claimed proficiency in Microsoft Excel; however, co-workers have complained about Ron's proficiency with Excel.

What do you think?

In this case you need to consider if Ron has misrepresented his skill set. Ron may have lied on his resume and job application or he may have believed his skill was higher than it actually is. He may not have understood what level of expertise was expected of him. It may be easier to simply train Ron on the missing skills. You should assess exactly what is missing in Ron's Excel skill set and determine the level of training he needs to become proficient in meeting the job expectations.

Scenario Practice



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Suggested Readings

As mentioned at the beginning of this course, it's difficult to provide all pertinent information regarding day-to-day supervision. Although this course introduced a variety of topics, it's recommended you supplement what you've learned here with additional knowledge.

[Click here for suggested readings that will provide more information in this area.](#)



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Chapter Summary: Day-to-Day Challenges

In this chapter, you learned about dealing with difficult employee situations.

The next section is the final exam.

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Final Exam

Assess
Your

Knowledge

This final examination is made up of 10 questions. You will need a minimum score of 70%, or 7 correct answers, to successfully pass this examination.

Click the Next button to proceed to the final examination.

